

Church elders covered up rape of young girl



Molly Glassey | 17th Jun 2016 6:07 PM

CHURCH elders knew one of their parishioners had raped a young girl, but did not tell police for more than a decade, Warwick District Court has heard.

The shocking secret was revealed today as Southern Downs man Brian David Harvey, 47, was jailed for eight months for digitally raping the girl, a fellow parishioner of a Jehovah's Witness church.

The court heard Harvey, who was aged in his 30s at the time, molested the young daughter of a friend on three occasions and raped her once.

Barrister Robbie Davies told the court the girl, who was not even a teenager at the time, reported the abuse to the church three years later, in 2002, and they "made their own inquiries".

As a result, Harvey was "ostracised" from the church for three years but the matter was not reported to police.

Despite admitting the crimes to elders, he was still able to attend church services during his period of ostracisation.

The victim made a complaint to police last year, as an adult.

Harvey was formally charged in October, 2015, with three counts of indecent treatment of a child under 12 and one of rape.

He pleaded guilty to all four counts in court yesterday, while his victim, now aged in her 20s, sat crying in the back of the room.

Crown Prosecutor Shauna Rankine said the offences took place over a 10-day period.

Mrs Rankine said the girl tried to push her abuser away but couldn't, due to his size.

"He overcame the resistance of the child," she said.

Mr Davies said Harvey admitted the crimes when approached by church elders.

The victim was visibly distressed during the proceedings and was unable to read her victim impact statement to the court.

Mrs Rankine spoke on her behalf.

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"I cannot start a relationship; I feel scared about what (men) will do to me," the statement read.

"I was happy.

"I was not insecure about hanging out with men."

Judge David Andrews acknowledged the emotional effect the offences had on the victim.

"The complainant who has suffered continuing grief as a result of your offending, feels even now.....that she's not confident enough to enter into a relationship as a result of what you've done," Mr Andrews said.

"You were a person in whom considerable trust had been given."

In sentencing Harvey, Mr Andrews told him he had taken into consideration the fact he had already been punished by the church and through the breakdown of his marriage.

"And I take in to account also your good prospects of good rehabilitation, which seem to be demonstrated by your willingness to admit these things, and your lack of offending in the long period since this offence."

He was sentenced to two and a half years jail, which will be suspended after he serves eight months.

A woman in the gallery was visibly upset with the sentence, yelling "you sleaze" at Harvey.

The Daily News contacted the church for comment but have yet to receive a response.



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